

Working Together to Stop the Trend

The statistics speak loudly.

One in five young people today is overweight. This is a 50% jump in the last two decades. The fact is that an overweight child runs a higher chance of becoming an overweight adult and, subsequently, faces a higher risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, and other diseases. Poor diet and inadequate physical activity together account for at least 300,000 deaths in the US annually and are the second most prominent identifiable contributor to premature death.

Parents, guardians, and educators of children play vital roles in creating a community that promotes healthful eating and physical activity.



More than 95% of all 5-17 year olds are enrolled in school. Therefore, schools are ideally suited to provide students the skills and support they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors and to be physically active for life.

Poor Eating Habits

Our culture's emphasis on weight without the balance of a total health message is affecting even young children. Children as young as 6 have been treated for obsessions with dieting and weight. A national survey of 8th and 10th grade students found that while trying to lose weight

- 32% skipped meals
- 22% fasted
- 7% used diet pills
- 5% induced vomiting after meals
- 3% used laxatives.

Too Little Exercise

- Fewer than 25% of children get vigorous daily activity.
- Only 19% of all high school students are physically active for at least 20 minutes in a daily physical education class even though 93% of them say they enjoy physical education in school.

Health Promotion – A Community Effort

Programs that promote healthy eating and physical activity behaviors during childhood and adolescence may not only prevent some of the leading causes of illness and death but also decrease direct healthcare costs and improve quality of life.

For Your Own Health

Make healthy choices that fit your lifestyle so you can do the things you want to do.

Be Realistic

Make small changes over time in what you eat and your level of activity. After all, small steps work better than giant leaps.

Be Adventurous

Expand your tastes to enjoy a variety of foods.

Be Flexible

Balance what you eat and the physical activity you do over several days. No need to worry about just one meal or one day.

Be Sensible

Enjoy all foods; just don't overdo it.

Be Active

Walk the dog; don't just watch the dog walk.



*Remember...
children learn by example!*

This message was developed by the Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit (303-866-6654) in cooperation with the Colorado School Food Service Association. Partial funding was provided by Western Dairy Council. Brochure may be reproduced and adapted without permission.

Helping Raise Healthy Children



Realizing the importance of school nutrition and physical education programs

Nutrition

Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is critical because changing poor eating patterns in adulthood can be difficult. School breakfast and lunch programs provide opportunities to practice healthy eating. Nationally, on any given day, approximately 60% of students eat school lunch and 10% of students eat school breakfast. These students are deciding what to eat in two-thirds of their meals for the day.

Benefits of Healthy Eating

- Helps young people grow, develop, and do well in school.
- Prevents childhood and adolescent health problems such as obesity, eating disorders, dental cavities, and iron deficiency anemia.
- Helps prevent health problems later in life, including heart disease, cancer, and stroke — the three leading causes of death.



Parents, Guardians, or Educators can...

- Offer children a variety of healthy foods, keep healthy snacks on hand, and make mealtime an enjoyable experience.
- Help school staff plan activities where students can sample healthy foods or provide healthy snacks for school parties and special events.
- Join students for lunch and encourage them to eat a variety of foods.
- Encourage children to eat foods from all the food groups during school meals.
- Help children learn to balance high fat foods with low fat foods.



What is healthy eating?

- Eating a variety of foods.
- Balancing the food you eat with physical activity.
- Eating plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits.
- Choosing a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol and moderate in sugars, salt, and sodium.

(Information is from the US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans)

Averaged over a week's time, school meals meet these guidelines!

Physical Activity

Young people can build healthy bodies and create healthy lifestyles by having fun while being physically active every day. School and community programs can help young people get active and stay active.

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

- Improves strength and endurance.
- Helps build healthy bones and muscles.
- Helps control weight.
- Reduces anxiety and stress and increases self-esteem.
- May improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.



In addition, young people say they like physical activity because it is fun; they do it with friends; and it helps them learn skills, stay in shape, and look better.

Participation in Physical Education classes encourages and enables young people to meet their weekly physical activity needs!



Parents, Guardians, or Educators can...

- Teach by example. Parents who are physically active are more likely to have physically active children.
- Help children develop a positive attitude about physical activity. Positive experiences go a long way toward building a child's confidence.
- Play with your children.
- Make daily physical activity a priority, equal to that of buckling seat belts.
- Advocate for adequate physical education.



How much physical activity do young people need?

Everyone can benefit from a moderate amount of physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Young people should select activities they enjoy that fit into their daily lives. Examples of moderate activity include...

- Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes or running 1 ½ miles in 15 minutes.
- Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes or 4 miles in 15 minutes.
- Dancing fast for 30 minutes or jumping rope for 15 minutes.
- Playing basketball for 15-20 minutes or volleyball for 45 minutes.

